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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the origin and development of a student exchange program between the State University College at Brockport, N.Y., and the District of Columbia Teachers College in Washington, D.C. Preceded by an exchange of professors from the respective laboratory schools in 1966-67 and operated without financial grants of any kind, the program now offers senior year student teachers the opportunity to teach and live in environments with which they have previously had little contact. Teachers from the inner-city college are placed in middle-class white suburban schools, Brockport seniors in inner-city schools of primarily black population. The benefits of the exchange, in terms of intercultural and interracial understanding as well as knowledge of education and teaching, have led to its continuation and expansion during the past two years. In addition to discussing the reactions of students to new conditions and communities, the paper describes the ways in which administrative problems involved in harmonizing different college programs were responded to (curriculum requirements, non-resident tuition, etc.). Follow-up studies on the participants and their post-graduation teaching positions indicate almost unanimous commitment toward involvement with urban education and/or working with the disadvantaged. (JES)

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STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

SUNY / Brockport
and
DCTC / Washington, D.C.

SP003713

A STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

between

State University College at Brockport, N.Y.
and
the District of Columbia Teachers College
Washington, D. C.

State University College at Brockport and the District of Columbia Teachers College, Washington, D. C., through an exchange of senior year student teachers have developed an experience for white and Negro students to gain in intercultural and interracial understanding and knowledge of education and teaching.

Teachers College students coming from an "inner city college" and normally assigned for their senior year professional program to inner and other central city elementary schools have had a living and learning experience in middle class white suburban schools. Brockport seniors from a college that is to some extent suburban to Rochester have had assignments in Washington, D. C., inner and other central city schools, facing a large proportion, if not entirely, black elementary and junior high school children -- with both groups finding success.

Genesis of the Exchange

After preliminary discussion of an exchange and the possibility of developing simulated learning experiences in 1965-66, the two colleges had exchange professors from the respective laboratory schools in 1966-67.* Concluding that "uprooting" faculty members for a period of exchange was not easy, in 1967-68 the Colleges reviewed the exchange, agreed that student exchange during the senior year might prove

* Two laboratory school instructors from the Teachers College taught in Brockport in the fall of 1966 for several months. Two Brockport Campus School instructors visited, observed, and taught in some classes at DCTC's LaSalle Laboratory School during two weeks of the spring of 1967.

more fruitful, and planned for a program in 1968-69.

The Colleges initiated the exchange in September 1968. Three elementary education majors from Brockport came to Washington, D. C. Four elementary education majors left their Washington homes and college to enter classes and schools at Brockport.

The First Exchange

Brockport studnets, all girls, lived with Negro families not far from Whittier Elementary School, a central city school (not precisely "inner city" in income and environmental conditions). For their cooperating teachers and supervising instructors, the Brockport girls had Negroes. And the Washington, D. C., students, three young women and one young man, went into far different college classroom situations from those they were accustomed to and into classrooms with white or nearly all white children from a much higher income level than the children they customarily would have faced. The three girls lived with white families; the young man took an apartment with a white college student.

All made adjustments. All learned a great deal. All recalled some experience directly or closely related to their race or skin color. All concluded that basically and fundamentally "Kids are just kids." All succeeded. All were offered teaching positions in the school districts where they did their student teaching. All returned to their "home" bases for appointments to teach this year; they are teaching.

The Honeoye Falls (New York) Times told about Philip PremDas, the black male student from DCTC, showing him in a picture (appended) with children at the Manor School. Mr. PremDas in addition to student teaching coached the school's wrestling team (and helped pay his way).

Elizabeth Burns, from Fulton, New York, thought "City kids are more alive." She would like to teach in a big city. Karen Smith reported, at a dinner at Brockport when she returned after the fall semester, that "Everyone was so nice to me." (See

also appended.) She added that when the children first saw the Brockport girls, she felt "they'd look at us as if we had three heads."

Two DCTC students, Saundra Braxton and Mary Francis, concluded that too much pressure was being placed on the suburban elementary school children. The Negro seniors observed that children in the third and fifth grades were already under psychiatric care, already well aware that they were expected to go to college.

The exchanges were not without the feeling or awareness of race, as Karen Smith mentioned. One Negro girl told the story of the experience in the home where she lived with a white family when special relatives were coming for a visit. Not too subtly, it was arranged that she not be in the home that evening. Jane Caughey of Tully, New York, related the experience with one fourth grade boy in her District of Columbia student teaching assignment: he thought she was discriminating against him because he was Negro. Miss Caughey recalled that she tried to convince him that his problem rested with a teacher and not a white person.

Not only did the experience help the students but, according to an instance cited by Saundra Braxton from DCTC, also the children. Mrs. Braxton learned from one child's parents that her presence as a young Negro teacher had done a great deal to end the child's "terror" of Negroes, about whom he had read in reports of riots.

Spring and Fall 1969

Brockport sent three junior high school majors to DCTC in February 1969, although the Teachers College did not "exchange" that semester. Two young women and one young man from New York State fitted well into Washington junior high schools, one school interracial in student and faculty population (Gordon) and the other by all standards "inner city" (Shaw Junior High School of the Shaw "MICCO" area).

Linda Welch, pictured in the appendix in a Shaw classroom situation, "related" well in literature to black, adolescent boys and proved effective as a student teacher. Likewise Marie Ryan and Richard Codding were successful. These three studnets,

with the returning DCTC students, had an unusual experience--the D. C. School Desegregation Program.

With a grant from the United States Office of Education under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title IV, Sec. 404), the Public Schools of the District of Columbia, moving into the second year of its School Desegregation Program,* found the services of the four DCTC students who had returned in January to Washington and of the three Brockport junior high school majors who came to DCTC in the spring to be of value in his program with District school teachers. The seven senior year students, white and Negro, participated in several seminars on intercultural, school desegregation, and ethnic issues. As bonafide participants in the discussions with experiences and conclusions of their own to offer, they were genuine contributors to the D. C. School Desegregation Program and were compensated with modest stipends for their work. (The Brockport-DCTC studnet exchange program has not been operated on grants of any sort.)

Currently, during the fall semester 1969 three DCTC students are now at Brockport and three Brockport seniors are in Washington, D.C.

Harmonizing Different College Programs

The student exchange was more than students adjusting themselves to new conditions and the communities accepting the students. The colleges had different senior year professional program. Further, how should non-resident tuition be handled -- by the students or by the the institutions or the school districts? Should the student register at his own college or with his new institution? The latter registration would later require a transcript. These questions of program and administration inevitably arise in exchange.

Brockport requires during the senior year, for example, a "Foundations of Education" course. The Teachers College requires "Educational Psychology," and some students enroll in a Seminar in education. The differences were resolved for the

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* PSDC Director John Haywood

elementary education majors for both colleges. For the secondary level the Brockport seniors* have fitted into the Teachers College "professional semester," a program providing all methodology, principles, and psychology together with the student teaching.

Solving the problems of tuition resulted in different actions in the two jurisdiction. In Washington, D.C., the Board of Education** waived the nonresident for the Brockport students providing that similar action was taken in New York. Tuition was actually paid in New York, not by the students, but by the school communitites. For the current year each student registers at his own institution and is then "assigned" to the other college.

These two institutions of higher education found that in an exchange program they could resolve administrative and program differences for the good of the exchange.

Future Plans

This spring (1969-70) both colleges plan to take steps to better acquaint students with the program on each campus and in so doing hopefully increase the number participating next fall. After orientation sessions on each campus, visitations to Brockport and Washington respectfully are being planned. The students visiting will be hosted by the students at the home site who are interested in the exchange.

Follow Up

Although it is premature to state specific results of the exchange program, the present involvement of the students who have participated in the program bear out the fact that possibly the Brockport students were influenced and sensitized to make a committment toward involvement with Urban education and/or working with disadvantaged. This is indicated in the follow up first year employment situations of the students:

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* Actually, in the spring of 1969 one Brockport exchange student had already earned the bachelor's degree but had not completed student teaching.

** At this time the District of Columbia Teachers College was under the authorization and control of the District of Columbia Board of Education.

Karen Smith - elementary teacher - Johnstown, N.Y. (disadvantaged)

Jane Caughey - elementary teacher - West Irondequoit, N.Y. (suburban-integrated school)

Linda Welch - West High - Rochester, N.Y. (predominant Black Student Body)

Richard Codding - Benjamin Franklin - Rochester, N.Y. (predominant Black Student Body)

Mary Ryan - Vista

Elizabeth Burns - substituting in Syracuse, N.Y. area and awaiting job opportunities in either Chicago or New York City

As reported above, the DCTC students also were appointed to central city Washington elementary schools.